DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 281 957 UD 025 514

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TITLE Black Girls and Women in Elementary Education. History of Black Women's Education in the South, 1865-Present. Instructional Modules for Educators, Module I.
INSTITUTION James Madison Univ., Harrisonburg, Va.
SPONS AGENCY Women's Educational Equity Act Program (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 86
NOTE 10p.; For the other modules in this series, see UD 025 515-516. Photographs will not reproduce clearly.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055) -- Historical Materials (060)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Black Education; Black History; Black Teachers; *Elementary Education; Females; *Racial Bias; Reconstruction Era; Regional Characteristics; *School Segregation; Sex Stereotypes; United States History; *Womens Education; Womens Studies
IDENTIFIERS *Black Womens Studies; *United States (South)

ABSTRACT

The quality of elementary education has been highly dependent on factors beyond a child's control--sex, race, economic situation, geographical location, and time in history. It is also shaped by the people who control the education--the teachers, administrators, and governing officials--and by the goals they design. This module explores these variations as they have affected the elementary schooling of black girls and women in the South since 1865. It is the first of four modules designed to help educators learn more about the double bias that has faced southern black women in American schools since the Civil War. The following topics are discussed: (1) education during reconstruction; (2) the decline of public support for black education from 1877 to 1900; (3) women's life and teaching in late 19th century black classrooms; (4) interest in designing an appropriate black education, 1900-30; (5) early 20th century school life; and (6) school experience in the mid-20th century. Sidebars include excerpts from the diary of a New England teacher; excerpts from other texts showing the role of women in the 19th century; an interview with an urban black girl at the turn of the century; a description of rural school life, 1914-15; questions for discussion; activities for enrichment; and a bibliography. Several black and white photographs are included. (PS)

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MODULE I

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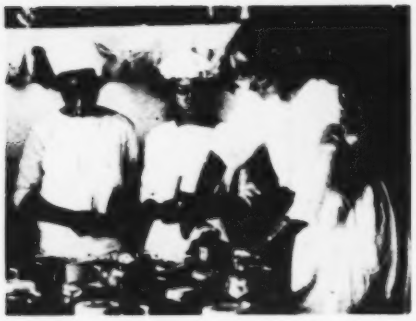

MODULE 1
Black Girls and Women in Elementary Education
History of Black Women's Education in the South, 1965-Present
Instructional Modules for Educators

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Women's Educational Equity Act Program
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
William Bennett, Secretary

Preface

This module is the first of four designed to help educators learn more about the double bias that has faced Southern black women in American schools since the Civil War. It is hoped that learning about this heritage will sensitize them to black girls' and women's current educational needs and will help them appreciate black women's present successes, efforts to achieve, and achievements.

The modules describe the historical development of elementary, vocational, high school, and college education for black girls and women. Each contains notes, a bibliography, questions for discussion, and suggested activities. The modules may be used separately or as a set.

These materials were created by Elizabeth L. Ihle at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia, with the assistance of a grant from the Women's Educational Equity Act program. James Madison provided an initial faculty research grant to get the study underway, and the Rockefeller Archive Center provided a grant which facilitated the use of its materials. Dr. Ihle wishes to acknowledge the following libraries' and archives' cooperation in her research: Bennett College, Fisk University, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical University, the Southern Historical Collection of the University of North Carolina, Spelman College, the Rockefeller Archive Center, the Schlesinger Library of Radcliffe College, Tennessee State University, and Virginia State University.

A number of individuals contributed expertise to the project, and a debt of gratitude is owed to them all. Drs. Faustine Jones-Wilson of Howard University and Beverly Guy-Sheftall of Spelman College reviewed the manuscript and made many helpful suggestions, though Dr. Ihle takes full responsibility for any inadequacies still remaining. Their insightful comments, patience, and enthusiasm are deeply appreciated. The module was also field-tested by undergraduates at James Madison University. Their assistance and that of their instructors, Dr. Violet A. Allain and Mr. George Joyce, offered the author valuable student and faculty perspectives on the module. The grant support staff of the Women's Educational Equity Act offered important counsel whenever called upon. Finally, the author's husband John Blair Reeves was a source of encouragement and the epitome of support. To all of these people, the author expresses appreciation.

Kowaliga (ALA) School, 1909. (Reprinted by permission. General Education Board records. Ala 29. Rockefeller Archive Center.)

Introduction

Elementary education has always been the most widespread type of schooling and the foundation on which more advanced training has been built. It has generally been regarded as the same for everyone—girls and boys of all races begin by learning to read, write and do arithmetic. The elementary years have also been widely accepted as the first step to adult success as the age-old dream of getting ahead begins as a child enters school.

Despite its universal nature, the quality of elementary education has been highly dependent on factors beyond a child's control—sex, race, economic situation, geographical location, and time in history. It is also shaped by the people who control the education—the teachers, administrators, and governing officials—and by the goals they design. This module explores these variations as they have affected the elementary schooling of black girls and women in the South since 1865.

Education During Reconstruction

After the Civil War illiteracy was the rule rather than the exception among newly freed blacks because the laws in a number of Southern states had forbidden teaching slaves to read or write. Consequently most of blacks' early postwar education was at the elementary level. Mission societies began schools in the South in 1862, and the Freedman's Bureau in 1865. Founded to help the emancipated slaves in Southern areas controlled by Union troops, the Bureau started schools as it dispensed supplies and food. Before it was disbanded in 1870, it taught some 250,000 students of all ages in some 4000 schools. The mission societies remained involved in black education for decades, and the largest of these was the American Missionary Association (AMA). It and others sent hundreds of people each year to start schools and teach Southern blacks.

Most of the teachers in these schools were white, and many were from New England. Typically, men were employed as supervisors or as teachers in the upper levels, and women were employed in the lower grades. Some recorded their experiences in black schools. (See excerpt from the diary of a New England teacher.) Only a few black women were

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Education During Reconstruction

continued from page 1

employed by the Bureau or mission societies as teachers, and the evidence suggests that at least at this early period white women were preferred.[1] The AMA, for example, while recognizing that black teachers were more effective than white ones in black schools, would not hire black women with dependent children but would hire white ones with similar situations. The black teachers it did hire were assigned to segregated housing, to lower grades, and to remote schools.[2] The best known of the black mission teachers was Charlotte Forten. Born into a prosperous Philadelphia family, Forten was very well educated and spent several years teaching in the Sea Islands on the South Carolina coast. Her diaries reveal many of the same attitudes towards the former slaves as do her white colleagues' but also show a deep commitment to the uplift of her people.

Blacks' postwar enthusiasm for education has been well-documented. Working men and women as well as children flocked to schools wherever they could find or create them. Not only did they attend day schools but also night schools and Sabbath schools, all of which aimed at instilling basic literacy. Evidence suggests that blacks generally preferred schools founded and run by blacks to those of the Bureau or mission societies. In many instances black teachers started their own schools, and some of those founders were women; Mary Peake established one of the earliest at Fortress Monroe, Virginia, in September, 1861. Another black woman named Deveaux publicized and expanded a secret black school which she had been running in Savannah since 1833.[3]

Many whites were not supportive of black education and sometimes in the early postwar years threatened or abused students, parents, or teachers. Black schools were defaced or burned, or the tax assessments on them were made exorbitantly high. Cases were reported of children being attacked on the way to school and parents being terrorized or fired from their jobs. Teachers were abused according to their sex and race. While black male teachers were whipped and/or murdered, white males were merely threatened. Black female teachers were subjected to physical violence, but the worst white female teachers usually suffered was being ignored by the white community or being refused housing. □

From the Diary of a New England Teacher

February 13, 1869. Delicious day—and the carpenter worked hard in my school rooms, took down one partition and moved the other, it greatly enlarges our room, and will be a decided benefit to teacher & pupils—now where three were crowded only two need sit—and all face the black boards—

March 20, 1869....Last evening, by invitation the parents of our children met in my school room...I read a chapter Mr. Wesey prayed—& then Mary & I spoke to them about raising a fund to support the school another year—They listened attentively and we agreed to meet once a month; Each one had his or her name put down—pledged to pay a stated sum—. Some paid right away & all spoke in most flattering terms of the progress of their children—. Had a most satisfactory time—and $19—was given or pledged—We are much pleased by the result—.

April 30, 1869. Very rainy in the morning—, but stopped towards noon and most of the children came—; so that we rehearsed for tomorrow—.

May 1, 1869. Rain during the night and many anxious eyes to see if the day would be fair for our May Party...130 children all dressed nicely and singing on the way, were soon in the beautiful oak grove, where ranks were broken and they went off to play—. At 3 exercises commenced, singing, lessons, [memorized] pieces, dialogues, &c—; 3 little girls and as may [sic] boys stood up on a bench & said a piece which I had taught them, looking very cute and pretty—.

May 24, 1869. I managed both schools-95-and the children all did so nicely, got along well—

May 27, 1869. Our children are so often kept away to work, makes our school smaller, though my average is 49.

From the diary of Martha Schofield, quoted by permission of the Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill, NC.

The Decline of Public Support for Black Education, 1877-1900

When Reconstruction officially ended in 1877, federal protection of Southern blacks ceased. At the time the loss was not particularly critical; but, as decades passed and native Southern whites regained control of their state and local governments, the loss of federal protection was keenly felt. The restored white governments passed increasingly restrictive laws and ordinances regulating blacks' access to public facilities, work habits, political participation, and other facets of daily life. The United States Supreme Court began upholding these laws, reflecting the nation's growing sentiment that race regulations were best left to the South. The crowning legal blow came in the famous 1896 Supreme Court case *Plessey v. Ferguson* which established the "separate but equal" doctrine as the nation's guide to racial relations. This decision and the years of policy making preceding it had a powerful influence on the configuration of late nineteenth and early twentieth century education. The South concentrated on the separate stipulation and frequently ignored the equal.

After 1877 and until the early part of the twentieth century the planter class controlled local and state government and hence public education throughout the South. Fearful of an educated working class, the majority of planters minimized their government's commitment to provide education by keeping taxes low. Consequently, expenditures on education were minimal for both races but were least for blacks.

White children were provided school buildings, equipment, and personnel before black ones were, and the federal courts seemed to care less and less. Three years after *Plessey,* blacks in Richmond County in Georgia brought suit because the county, which operated a high school for white girls and another for white boys, closed the only black high school in order to accommodate more blacks in the elementary grades. The Supreme Court chose not to get involved; despite the clear violation of the "separate but equal" doctrine, the Court ruled in *Cumming v. Richmond County Board of Education* (1899) that federal law was not broken and the county could allocate its tax money as it saw fit.

Because public facilities for blacks were poor or nonexistent, mission societies and blacks themselves began a number of schools. Although their founders frequently called them "institutes," "seminaries," or "colleges," they mainly functioned in their earliest years as elementary schools because a majority of their pupils had not had an earlier opportunity to attend school and still needed to learn the academic basics. They may have offered secondary or even college courses to a small minority of their student body, but most of their work was at the middle elementary level, what might be third through sixth grades today. Although some of these schools were founded for one sex or the other, most were coeducational.

Before the turn of the century the majority of the private black schools equally mixed academics, practical skills, and character-building, and blacks' education improved overall. In 1895 two female researchers on black women of the South reported that "We were told at Hampton that the students who now apply for entrance are nearly as advanced as those who graduated twenty years ago, and at the Scotia School for girls they are commencing to receive the daughters of their first graduates, and find these know nearly as much on entering as their mothers did when they left."[4] □

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Women's Life and Teaching in Late Nineteenth Century Black Classrooms

Although life in almost any late nineteenth century classroom was highly regulated and sex-stereotyped, some schools depending upon their location and community support were more advanced than others. The quality of schooling in the South, especially that for blacks, tended to be poorer than in other parts of the nation. Classes were large and ungraded; teachers were underpaid and frequently unqualified; and supplies were short. The length of the school year was usually dependent upon the needs of the agricultural economy with the term beginning after harvest and ending before spring planting.

The last three decades of the century witnessed greater numbers of blacks entering teaching. White Southerners generally wished to keep teachers as well as pupils segregated by race and were consequently supportive of giving a few blacks sufficient education to become teachers. Although nearly all the Southern states had established some sort of state normal (teacher training) school for blacks by the end of the century, few black teachers could afford to attend. Some were able to attend "summer normals," a week or more training provided by a normal school or school district during the summer months. Certification of teachers had not yet been implemented in most Southern states, and all that most rural school boards required of black elementary teachers was just simply the candidates' successful completion of five or six years of elementary schooling themselves. Cities or towns near public or private secondary or higher educational institutions for blacks were generally able to hire teachers of somewhat higher qualifications.

Teaching in black schools became a preserve dominated increasingly by black women. (The same became true for white women in white schools.) In 1900 Virginia, for example, reported 842 black male teachers and 1351 black female teachers.[5] Also like white teachers, black teachers were becoming more likely to be young and single.[6] In fact, some states or localities expressly forbade a female teacher to be married. Consequently for many women, teaching became an occupation appropriate only for their youth.

Teachers' pay was dependent on race, sex, and location as well as on qualifications. Generally, local school systems designated their own qualifying examinations and justified paying black teachers less by maintaining that black teachers were not so well prepared as white ones. Although women of both races were paid only a half or two-thirds as much as men, black women still received less than white ones. The usual justification for paying women less than men was that men had to take care of more discipline problems. The fact that women had less experience and sometimes less education also contributed to the sex differential.

Despite the disadvantages of salary, women of both races were increasingly drawn to teaching, and for blacks teaching was the most prestigious and highest paying position to which a woman could aspire. By 1910, over 17,000 black women taught in the Southern states. Outnumbering black men in the field by over 3 to 1, they comprised one percent of the region's black women working outside the home.[7]

The elementary education these early schools offered included not only the standard three *R*s but also instruction in morality and living standards. While blatantly teaching a child morality might seem presumptuous today, doing so a hundred years ago was common and accepted practice in any school, and particularly in Southern black ones. Textbook historian Ruth Miller Elson maintains that nineteenth century textbook writers were frequently far more concerned with children's moral development than with the cultivation of their minds.[8] Consequently, the books' contents were usually value-laden. Although texts published after the war were unanimous in accepting emancipation and condemning slavery, they were still frequently racist and sexist. Blacks were generally viewed as happy and childlike people who needed direction from whites to succeed; women were often described as weak and defenseless individuals in need of masculine guidance. (See excerpt below.) Imagine the effect of these double stereotypes upon black girls as they read and frequently memorized pieces describing themselves as limited because of their skin color and sex.

The few texts published specifically for ex-slaves treated women no better. Women were praised for their behavior rather than for their actions. The most frequently cited example of black womanhood in these texts was poet Phillis Wheatley. Despite her considerable talent, her modesty and character received more coverage than did her accomplishments. The well-known former slave, Ellen Craft, was praised more for her modest and ladylike behavior rather than for her knowledge and daring.[9]

□

Girls and Women in Nineteenth Century Texts

Although Ruth Miller Elson's study of texts focussed on "mainstream" texts, i.e. not texts designed specifically for ex-slaves, the views of women it describes applied at least in part to black women. Black girls, like their white sisters, were supposed to control their public behaviors carefully and defer to boys.

> Restrictions on female behavior are carefully delineated, and they begin in childhood. Because public speaking is "highly improper" for her, the girl is not to be trained in oratory, the most popular subject in her brother's curriculum. She is cautioned: "Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever."[15] Small girls should not engage in their brothers' activities. Even a little girl who wants to help her brother build a cart is restrained because it is not "a proper employment for a young lady."[16]
>
> In the later nineteenth century there is some disagreement as to how much outdoor exercise a girl should have. The typical attitude is: "Kate is a good girl. She will not speak in a loud tone when her aunt is ill. Nor will she leap, and run, and act like a boy," and "A girl fell from a swing...A swing is not a safe thing for a little girl,"[17]
>
> .....
>
> An 1883 Reader indicates what happens to boys' activities when girls infiltrate them. In a particular school the girls belong to a tatting club and the boys to a woodchuck-hunting society. At first the boys refuse when the girls ask for admission to the woodchuck club. After the girls promise to wear veils to avoid freckles and to learn woodchuck lore, the boys allow them to join, but the girls find it impossible to face killing the woodchuck at the end of the hunt. In the end the girls disband the woodchuck society and turn it into a picnic club.[19] Thus a symbolic emasculation awaits boys who admit girls into their activities.

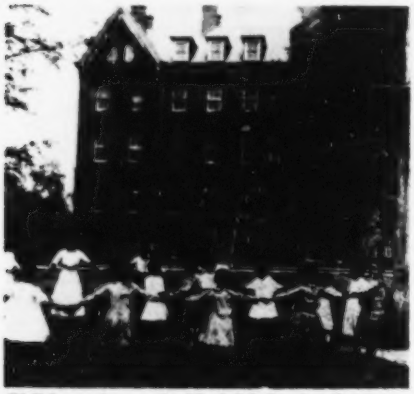
[15]Kingsley poem in James Baldwin, *School Reading by Grades: Third Year*. New York: American Book Co., 1897, p. 166. The quotation in the previous sentence is from the preface of *The New Pleasing Instructor: or, Young Lady's Guide to Virtue and Happiness*. Boston: Thomas and Andrews, 1799.

[16]William Biglow, *The Youth's Library*. Vol. I. Salem, Mass.: Joshua Cushing, 1803, p. 71.

[17]The quotations in this sentence are from the following in that order: Richard Soule and William Wheeler. *First Lessons in Reading*. Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1866, p.32; Epes Sargent and Amasa May, *The New American First Reader*. Philadelphia: J.H. Butler and Co., 1871, p. 26.

[19]William Swinton. *Swinton's Fourth Reader*. New York: American Book Co., 1883, pp. 33-46.

—Ruth Elson, *Guardians of Tradition: American Schoolbooks of the Nineteenth Century*, Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, pp. 304-05.



Children play at the Model School at Spelman College. (Reprinted by permission. Spelman College Archives. Atlanta, GA.)

An Urban Black Girl at the Turn of the Century

I went to what they called Mary Street School, and at that school they had what they called at that time [1904] an ABC gallery where the children of six years were placed. There must have been a hundred children on that gallery; it was like a baseball stadium with the bleachers. You sat up on those bleachers. And the only thing I could see the teachers could do was to take you to the bathroom and back. By the time she got us all to the bathroom and back, it was about time to go home. We didn't learn too much, and my mother was aware of that so she took me out of that public school, and there were numbers of elderly women in Charleston who kept little schools in their homes. And so I went to one...And at that school, run by a Mrs. Nuckels, I learned to read and write. And she taught us a very hard way. If you couldn't spell a word that she asked you, why, she whipped every letter into your hands. This was the way we learned to spell...

[To be a lady] means never to go out without your gloves on, never to let anybody know what you are going for. She [Clark's mother] said, "If you're going downtown for a common pin, it's nobody's business." And you dare not holler across the street. You're not supposed to [yell] across and say, "Hey, Sally!" or "Hey, Sue!" That's not the sign of a lady. And you never eat on the street. And if a neighbor down the street would say that they [sic] saw us coming through the street eating—and you could buy some peanuts for a penny, just a lot of peanuts, and there was a baker across there, you could get some cookies, and we'd get a big bag for a nickel—but if you ate that thing in the street and somebody told her, you got whipped. You shouldn't eat in the street; that wasn't the sign of a lady.

(Interview with Septima Poinsett Clark, July 25, 1976. Oral History Program #4007, Interview G-16, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library. Chapel Hill. Quoted by permission.)

Designing an Appropriate Black Education, 1900-30

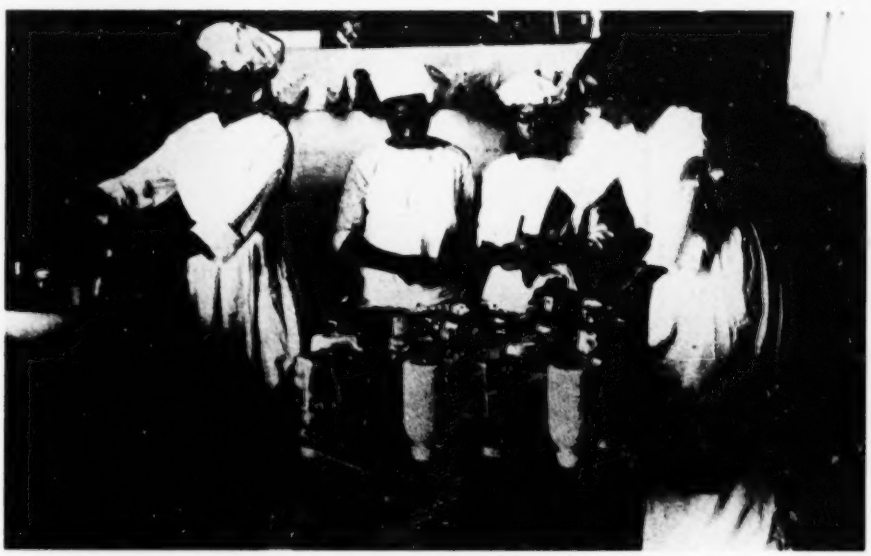
Around the turn of the century a change in attitude toward blacks' public education began. An emerging white Southern middle class began to reason that a properly trained laboring class might benefit the South's economy. If the South were ever to diversify its economy, then it would need workers appropriately educated to accept industrial values like punctuality, obedience, and efficiency. Northern philanthropists, concerned about the general economic and social condition of the South, renewed a commitment to improve education throughout the region by adding to funds that had been created for that purpose a decade or so earlier. Although the funds were exceedingly careful not to alienate whites and to stay away from race issues, they fostered more extensive education for blacks than the Southern public had previously provided.

Other converts to the cause of black education were those concerned with what they perceived as low moral standards among blacks, and particularly among black women. The custom of white men's sexual abuse of black girls and women had not died away with slavery, and black women were afforded little legal protection. The situation was a classic double-standard—white males were forgiven, and the onus of loose morals was placed on the victims. Although increasing numbers of Southern men and women wished to stop the practice, the region was not ready to prosecute a white man on charges placed by a black woman. Instead of seeking punishment for the perpetrators, reformers sought instead to educate the victims—a circuitous and not especially effective solution.

Although the argument for black women's education on moral grounds may have been somewhat specious, it did provide a stimulus to their education. It also agreed with thinking nationwide—that the proper kind of education could strengthen a woman's sense of right and wrong. It was also in harmony with the domestic domino effect: educate a mother and improve her morals, and her whole family would benefit.

The key to all these cries for more education for blacks was *appropriateness*, and none of the advocates proposed the same education for both races or both sexes. Instead they sought an education to prepare a person for her or his "station in life." As examples of how schools for blacks ought to be developed, both educators and industrialists frequently cited Hampton or Tuskegee, founded respectively in 1868 and 1881. (See module 2 for a description of these institutions' work.) Although these schools served mainly older youths, their philosophy of providing practical, sex-typed vocational training on virtually an equal basis with academics had an effect even on blacks' elementary schooling.

Morality and racism permeated a curriculum that mixed the 3 R's and practical training. Schoolbooks and domestic and vocational science subtly taught about the sanctity of the home and the need for blacks to adjust to a second-class citizenship. Although educators and industrialists were pleased to offer blacks an education that would improve their home life and living conditions, they had no intention of encouraging any alterations to the underlying economic and social structure of the region. They also had no intention of altering traditional sex roles. Therefore, for education to be appropriate, it had to be relevant to sex as well as race. The result was that black boys were generally taught elementary agricultural skills, while girls learned domestic ones. For both groups, work habits and morality were stressed. □



Alabama Homemakers' Clubs, c. 1917. (Reprinted by permission. General Education Board records. 1007. ALA 160.2. Rockefeller Archive Center.)

Rural Alabama School. 1914. (Reprinted by permission. General Education Board records. 1007. ALA 163. Rockefeller Archive Center.)

Early Twentieth Century School Life

The skills elementary girls learned were predictable ones—simple cooking, sewing, and housekeeping. Sometimes they tended school gardens and prepared produce for them; older girls sometimes learned to can. The advent of Jeanes teachers in the 1910s encouraged the acquisition of these skills even more. In 1908 a black teacher, Miss Virginia E. Randolph, came to the attention of a General Education Board official, Jackson E. Davis, because her rural Virginia school was so clean—well-scrubbed floors, shining windows, a neat schoolyard. Davis thought her school and methods should be models for others, and he helped persuade a wealthy Quaker woman, Miss Anna T. Jeanes, to establish a fund to supply black teachers who would travel from one rural black school to the next offering more training in practical skills than the regular teacher could provide. This fund continued to provide Jeanes teachers throughout the South until the 1940s; and, although Jeanes teachers enriched the practical aspects of schooling for children of both sexes, the nature of their work made them a prime instrument of sex-typed education.

The Jeanes teachers frequently organized mothers' clubs and community meetings. Since mothers were perceived as the foundation of a household, Jeanes teachers naturally targetted them as the means of improving morality and living standards. The clubs functioned both as an educational vehicle for encouraging improved morality through better housekeeping and parenting skills and as a means of fostering mother-daughter activities. Since girls more than boys were perceived to be prone to loose morality, cooperation of school and home to keep tighter reins on the girls was a frequent result. (See the discussion of what it meant to be a lady in the excerpt about an urban girl's life and schooling and the description of the school values in the excerpt on rural school life.) The community meetings were designed to stimulate financial support for the local school; since black schools were usually ill-supported through taxes (See Table 1), the Jeanes teacher was frequently a catalyst in getting parents and other community members involved in raising money.

One important avenue for raising money, developing community spirit, and stimulating student achievement were annual school fairs and demonstrations. Records from a number of county-wide fairs in Arkansas in 1915 demonstrate the depth of sex-division in school life. One county awarded prizes for nature study: the best bouquet of flowers grown by a girl and the best collection of wild ferns by a boy. Another county held sewing contests for girls: the best hat, most attractive and daintiest dress, best kitchen apron, best crochet, and the best doll dress. Academic events were also frequently determined by sex. Spelling contests pitted the girls against the boys. Boys made speeches, but girls did not since public speaking by females was not considered ladylike. Instead girls learned to do "readings," interpretations of someone else's work. This limited their initiative in learning to think for themselves and to stand up for their ideas; it also helped perpetrate the image of females as people who entertain rather than enlighten others.

Athletic contests often accompanied these fairs, and more events were open to boys than to girls. Girls, if allowed to compete at all, had baseball throws, egg races, potato races, and a 50-yard dash. One county's potato races awarded a knife to the fastest boy and candy to the winning girl.[10] The message that girls did not need or want knives and preferred more short-lived awards was implicit. □

Rural School Life, 1914-15

Boys were taught to do woodwork and girls were taught to cook. The children of each school were encouraged to raise money to buy materials needed to carry on the work and the county doubled whatever amounts they raised. The boys used jack knives, stones and glass, if hammers, planes and saws could not be had. With these crude tools they made tables, window seats and box furniture. The girls brought pans and dishes from home; the Cottolene Company contributed cookbooks, biscuit cutters, measuring cups, and Cottolene [cottonseed oil used for cooking].

Sewing is now being taught to both boys and girls. At first a few boys objected, but such remarks as "I's a boy," "Can't she see us is boys?" failed to attract attention...

(Excerpt from "Mandy Lou Tells About Her Visit to Fulton County Negro Schools." (1914) General Education Board records. Series 1.1. Box 41. Folder 375. Rockefeller Archive Center. Quoted by permission.)

Personal appearance, politeness, obedience to rules, and deportment on street (sic) all receive due attention. Truthfulness, honesty, temperance, clean language and morals, and clean habits are all taught by precept and example. Yes, and reading, writing and arithmetic are helping to build up intelligence and character.

(Excerpt from "Mandy Lou Tells About Spelman Graduates." (1915) General Education Board records. Series 1.1. Box 41. Folder 375. Rockefeller Archive Center. Quoted by permission.)

The Mid-Twentieth Century

Although every black girl's education was influenced by her race and sex, and the descriptions of school life above applied nearly everywhere, the pattern varied according to the decade, location, and the economic condition of the girl's family. The quality of black elementary education improved as the twentieth century progressed. Methods became less rigid and harsh, and standards of appropriate female behavior grew more flexible. If a girl lived in an urban area, better and more extensive schooling was likely to be available; if her family had sufficient resources to send her to a private school, her education was likely to be better than in a public school. (See the account of elementary schooling in Charleston, S.C., in 1904 in the excerpt of urban black girl's life.)

Some private, urban elementary schools provided an education as up-to-date as that in any part of the country. Frequently it took place in the "campus schools" of private black universities. These schools generally emerged from the institution's early days when providing elementary education was the most practical way of securing students sufficiently prepared to do secondary and college work. As public education for blacks improved, some higher education institutions eventually phased the campus schools out, but the ones which preserved them used them to provide practice teaching experiences for their teacher trainees and as showcases for what black elementary education could become. As the campus schools became increasingly well-established, they acquired a wealth of equipment as compared to many public black schools, especially in rural areas. This enabled them to use methods as modern as any school in the country.

One of the major curricular trends of mid-twentieth century American schooling was Progressive Education, the movement begun by John Dewey to expand the function and methods of schooling to fit the needs of individual children and their society. It de-emphasized traditional "paper and pencil" learning in favor of methods which involved all the child's senses and used the child's own interests to stimulate intellectual growth. Like their white counterparts, outstanding black elementary schools implemented aspects of Progressive Education utilizing wide varieties of experiences and curricular materials. Despite the movement's success, it did not always provide girls and boys the same educational experiences. Tuskegee, for instance, ran a summer rural demonstration school in 1936 to train teachers in using Progressive Education techniques. With the theme of healthful rural living the school's director centered educational experiences around the rural home, truck garden, piggery, and poultry yard. Students made towels and handkerchiefs from cloth flour sacks, made soap from grease and lye, learned arithmetic in planning and harvesting garden produce, wrote stories about their activities, and learned geography by placing labels from canned goods on a map showing each product's origin. Some tasks were assigned not on interest but on sex. "Each day," the director reported, "two girls and one boy were appointed to prepare the lunch. The boy was responsible for bring ing the water, wood and keeping the firs [sic] in the stove. The girls prepared and served the lunch." Washing and drying hands was a pre-lunch ritual, and a girl was assigned to collect and wash the soiled towels.[11] Although the experience above was probably one of the most innovative and exciting in black elementary schools of the time, sex-typing was not only there, but as in the majority of American education of the time no one even thought about it.

Most blacks, however, lived in the rural South and away from Tuskegee, and the prospect of a rural black girl's receiving a quality elementary education was not bright. As late as 1927, 93.4% of black schools were rural, and 63.8% of those had only one room.[12] Buildings were frequently wooden and lacked plumbing. Black teachers were generally less prepared than white ones, especially in the rural areas. A black teacher in the city averaged two and a half years of training beyond high school, but the average rural

Table 1

Comparison of Blacks' and Whites' Schooling in Eleven Southern States (1928-29)

State	Average Monthly Teachers' Salaries		Average Length of Term in Days		Per Cent of Enrollment		Per Cent Spent for Teaching Equipment	
	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black
Alabama	106.07	55.75	158.0	127.0	63	37	84	16
Arkansas	89.29	66.26	149.5	131.7	77	23	89	11
Florida	152.50	76.40	165.0	128.0	71	29	94	6
Georgia	100.29	44.78	158.0	137.0	66	34	99	1
Kentucky	*	97.80	*	170.0	*	*	*	*
Louisiana	129.20	85.28	174.0	112.0	62	38	90	10
Maryland	143.98	107.74	18.78	17.58	*	*	*	*
North Carolina	114.89	68.38	151.0	136.8	67	33	*	*
Oklahoma	107.64	82.94	*	*	92	8	*	*
South Carolina	121.05	55.51	173.0	114.0	55	45	*	*
Virginia	92.44	60.28	172.0	144.0	70	30	*	*

* Not reported

1 Data compiled from Fred McCuistion, *The South's Negro Teaching Force* (Nashville: Julius Rosenwald Fund, 1931), pp. 22 and 24.

Fisk University summer school curriculum laboratory for negro teachers and administrators, grades 4-6. c. 1936. (Reprinted by permission. General Education Board records. 1007. Tenn 12.4. Rockefeller Archive Center.)

New Hope (MISS) School Map Study, c. 1949. Visiting teacher on right and regular teacher on left. (Reprinted by permission. General Education Board records. 1007. Folder 849. Annual Report 1949. Rockefeller Archive Center.)

teacher had less than six months of such training.[13] The latter was described this way:

> *...The typical rural Negro teacher of the South is a woman of rural heritage about 27 years of age. She has completed high school and had ten weeks in summer schools. She teaches 47 children through six grades for a term of six months, remaining about two years in the same school. Her annual salary is $360.00, or $1.00 a day, and she teaches for about five years.*[14]

Although blacks' access to schooling and its quality had improved dramatically in the first three decades of the twentieth century, more progress was definitely needed. As more white school boards became convinced of the justice or necessity of delivering the same school services to students of both races, improvements were made in length of the school term, access to supplies and textbooks, and the quality of black school buildings. The most publicized gain for black women occurred in the 1930s and 40s when salaries of white and black teachers were equalized. With support from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) black teachers associations throughout the South began going to court to seek salary equalization. Although such actions often cost the individuals in whose names the cases were brought their jobs, the effort overall was successful. Since women comprised the greatest part of the teaching force, they were the greatest beneficiaries.

Simultaneously, a number of black psychologists and sociologists, the best known of whom was Kenneth B. Clark of the City College of New York, were studying the effects of segregation on black children. Their research, along with that of Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal, provided evidence that helped strike down the "separate but equal" doctrine in the famous 1954-55 *Brown v. Board of Education* case, brought on behalf of Linda Brown, a seven year-old black girl in Topeka, Kansas. Interestingly enough, however, although both sexes were frequently tested, separate results for each sex were seldom publicized. The point of much of the research was that segregation was inherently unequal, but almost no one was concerned that the sexes in the classroom were frequently segregated by activities. Black girls remained invisible.

The women's movement beginning in the 1960s increased the nation's sensitivity to the needs of girls and women, and the classroom was one of the first places given attention. A number of studies indicated that teachers' interactions with students were frequently shaped by race and sex with teachers having lower expectations of blacks than whites and giving girls less attention.[15] Textbooks were also closely examined. A study of textbook illustrations indicated that males were pictured more than females and that minority women were pictured only half as much as minority men, who themselves were inadequately represented.[16] Counseling was also examined with sex and race discovered as factors in what kind of counseling was given.

These discoveries influenced a number of developments. A number of organizations were founded to help counteract discriminatory practices and publications. Three of the most visible have been the Council on Interracial Books for Children, Women on Words and Images, and PEER (the project on Equal Education Rights of the NOW Legal Defense Fund). Congress passed the now-famous Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 which forbade sex discrimination in education. In 1974 it established the Women's Educational Equity Act (WEEA) and with it the National Advisory Council on Women's Educational Programs. These two bodies are supposed to assist the Department of Education in providing educational equity and to assist educational agencies in implementing Title IX. Although all of these developments have helped women of all races and nationalities, more needs to be done, especially for minority women.

Today much research is conducted about the impact of elementary schooling on blacks *or* on girls, but few results are reported on black girls by themselves. The result is that little is known about what happens to black girls in the elementary classroom. It is hard to make changes and provide an optimal learning environment if no one knows what works and what does not. One of the few reports to emerge notes that teachers' treatment of black girls produces a pattern of social isolation later on. This pattern develops as early as kindergarten with teachers' tendencies to praise black girls for their social and nuturing behaviors and white girls for their academic ones. By the middle elementary years white girls are less likely to choose black ones as their best friends since they tend to choose people most like themselves. The report also noted that even though white males and black females performed about the same academically in the elementary grades, teachers tended to evaluate the white males more positively. By fourth grade black girls have started to doubt their academic capability.[17]

This survey of the history of black girls and women in the elementary education was funded by WEEA because of the need to increase teachers' sensitivity to the proud history and current needs of black girls and women in the elementary classroom. Black girls and women have come a long way from a hundred and twenty-five years ago when elementary education was available to very few. They have been victims of racism *and* sexism, a double bias that they have challenged with increasing amounts of success. The degree of their continued progress rests in part upon the encouragement that they receive from the educational system, and that is why educators need to develop awareness and sensitivity to educational needs and heritage of this proud group of Americans. □

Questions for Discussion

1. What effect did people's sex, race, geographical location, and economic status have on the quality of their education? Do those factors affect people's education today? Explain.
2. Examine the excerpt from the diary of Martha Schofield, and then evaluate the school experiences she describes in terms of likely quality of education available.
3. What parallels exist between the educational experiences of black and white girls and women? What distinctions in education have been made on the basis of race, and what distinctions have been made on the basis of sex? What differences have existed between black and white girls' education?
4. Look carefully at the photographs in this module. What generalizations can you draw from them?

Activities for Enrichment

1. In many parts of the country there were (and sometimes are) schools that were traditionally black. In the South many schools were segregated by law. Investigate the history of a traditionally black school in your community. If possible, interview a former student about his/her recollections of school life.
2. Locate and review a history of a traditionally black institution that evolved from being an elementary school to a college or university. What factors influenced the transformation? Check to see what kind of references are made to black women and girls and how many of them there are. What does their absence or presence tell you about the historian's perspective?
3. Examine some textbooks of today and of previous years. (You may find older texts sometimes in libraries, in used book stores, and in school systems' administration building.) Examine the evolution of black girls' and women's portrayal in them.
4. Learn more about the current status of blacks and women in education by contacting one or more of the following organizations:

1. Council on Interracial Books for Children
   1841 Broadway
   New York, NY 10023
   tel. (212) 757-5339
2. Women on Words and Images
   P.O. Box 2163
   Princeton, NJ 08540
   tel. (609) 921-8653
3. The Educational Development Center (which is the dissemination center for projects funded the Women's Educational Equity Act)
   55 Chapel Street
   Newton, MA 02160
   tel. (800) 225-3088
4. Project on Equal Education Rights (PEER)
   1112 13th Street, N.W.
   Washington, DC 20005
   tel. (202) 332-7337

Notes

[1]Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), p. 56.

[2]Linda M. Perkins, "The Black Female American Missionary Association Teacher in the South, 1861-1870," *Black Americans in North Carolina and the South,* Jeffrey J. Crow and Flora J. Hatley, eds. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984), pp. 126-31.

[3]James D. Anderson, "Ex-Slaves and the Rise of Universal Education in the New South, 1860-1880," *Education and the Rise of the New South,* Ronald K. Goodenow and Arthur O. White, eds. (Boston: G. K. Hall and Co., 1981), p. 4.

[4]Mrs. E. C. Hobson and Mrs. C. E. Hopkins," A Report Concerning the Colored Women of the South," No. 9 of the Occasional Papers Published by the Trustees of the John F. Slater Fund (Baltimore: 1896), p. 11.

[5]*Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction,* 1899-1900, p. xiv.

[6]Jones, p. 144.

[7]Jones, p. 144.

[8]Ruth Miller Elson, *Guardians of Tradition: American Schoolbooks of the Nineteenth Century* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), p. 1.

[9]Robert C. Morris, *Reading, 'Riting, and Reconstruction: The Education of Freedmen in the South* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 205.

[10]Arkansas—rural education. General Education Board records. Series 1.1. Box 26. Folder 232. Rockefeller Archive Center.

[11]H. S. West, "Tuskegee Institute Rural Demonstration School Activities," General Education Board records. Series 1.1. Box 18. Folder 153. Rockefeller Archive Center.

[12]Fred McCuiston, *The South's Negro Teaching Force* (Nashville, TN: Julius Rosenwald Fund, 1931), p. 7.

[13]McCuiston, p. 8.

[14]McCuiston, p. 10.

[15]Myra Pollack Sadker and David Miller Sadker, *Sex Equity Handbook for Schools* (New York: Longman, 1982), p. 20.

[16]Sadker and Sadker, p. 16.

[17]Education Week, Vol. IV, Nos. 40-41 (August 21, 1985), p. 9.

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